



Cymorth Llywodraethu Gwybodaeth
ar gyfer Gofal Sylfaenol
Information Governance Support
for Primary Care

IGDC • DHCW

IG Guidance for Primary Care Services

Communicating emergency
prescriptions between
prescribers and community
pharmacies

Introduction

This guidance is to support Prescribers in requesting emergency medication supplies from Community Pharmacies. This includes those Practitioners working and prescribing remotely from their patients, where clinical need demands, and it is impractical to issue a physical prescription.

Where a prescription is required urgently and it is not possible for a patient or their representative to collect the physical prescription and the Electronic Prescription Service (EPS) is not in place, the Prescriber could request an emergency supply from a nominated Community Pharmacy. The preferred option to communicate prescriptions in these circumstances is via the NHS Wales email network.

NHS Wales Email Network – It is considered secure to transfer any information, including personal data, within the NHS Wales email network. For example, both the sender and receiver must have an email address ending in “@wales.nhs.uk”.

It should be noted that supplying medicines against a photograph, scan or fax of a prescription can be associated with risks including poor reproduction, sending to multiple pharmacies resulting in duplicate supplies being made and insecure systems of sending and receiving the prescription. The quality of the copy prescription should always be checked prior to sending.

Prior to transfer the Prescriber should evaluate if this is the most appropriate method to communicate such information and must send the original prescription to the pharmacy, to arrive within 72 hours, as prescriptions sent in these formats do not fall within the definition of a legally valid prescription.

Sending an emergency prescription at the request of a prescriber

Conditions for sending a copy of a prescription at the request of a Prescriber include:

- The Prescriber must contact the nominated pharmacy before communicating any prescription to check the availability of the Pharmacist and items to be prescribed and agree the method of sending the copy prescription. This will also reduce the risks of the prescription being missed. A follow up call may also be considered to confirm receipt or the use of a “read receipt” email report;
- The subject line should be populated with clear details, including how many prescriptions are attached, to help ensure that the prescriptions are not missed;
- The Pharmacist is satisfied that the request is from a 'relevant Prescriber';

- The Pharmacist is satisfied that a prescription cannot be provided immediately due to an emergency (e.g. patient cannot collect the prescription from the Prescriber, the Prescriber is unable to drop off the prescription at the pharmacy, the pharmacy is unable to collect the prescription, and the patient urgently needs the medicine(s), etc.);
- The Prescriber agrees to provide a written prescription within 72 hours;
- Schedule 1, 2 or 3 Controlled Drugs cannot be supplied in an emergency. Phenobarbital (also known as phenobarbitone or phenobarbitone sodium) is the exception and can be authorised by UK Doctor, Dentist, Nurse or Pharmacist Independent Prescriber or supplementary Prescriber in an emergency for the treatment of epilepsy;
- An entry must be made in the pharmacy's POM register on the day of the supply (or, if impractical, on the following day)
- It is good practice to make a note in the patient record that the copy prescription was sent to the relevant Community Pharmacy and the format of issue. A record of when the original prescription is sent to the pharmacy should also be recorded in the patient notes or in a register.

The majority of Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians in Wales have been allocated with NHS Wales email accounts and this is the preferred address to be used and should always be the first option. However, there may be circumstances when staff on duty do not have a personal NHS Wales email address, therefore in these circumstances the Prescriber may consider sending the copy prescription to the Pharmacy shared email address as long as access to this account can be confirmed by the Pharmacy.

Ideally a copy of the prescription should be scanned using a work device and then attached to the email to be sent. If a photograph of the prescription is taken to attach to the email it should be taken on a work device with security applications in place. If circumstance dictates it is necessary to take the photograph on a personal device, it MUST be deleted from the device and any cloud storage immediately afterwards. If the photograph has been emailed from a personal account to a work account, the email MUST also be immediately deleted from the device, including from the personal email application.

Reducing risks of sending emergency prescriptions via email

All transfer of information systems can pose various risks; however, these can be reduced by following the below guidance:

- Prescribers and Pharmacists should only use the NHS Wales email system when emailing patient identifiable information to other healthcare professionals in Wales;
- Although the NHS Wales email system is considered safe, as a mitigating factor to avoid any inadvertent misdirection, additional pre-cautions such as encrypting attachments may also be considered when sending special category information (sensitive information);

- Only email personal information between the Prescriber and Pharmacy if both parties have a legitimate reason to send and receive it, and only do so if it is strictly necessary;
- Prescribers MUST contact the Pharmacy prior to sending a prescription via email to confirm which Pharmacist is on site so that they can email them directly or agree to use the Pharmacy NHS Wales shared inbox email address;
- There is always a risk of misdirection when sending emails. Prescribers must double check that the communication is being directed to the intended recipient to prevent risk of misdirection;
- The NHS Wales Email Address book should be used to check that the correct email address has been selected. The address book will detail the:
 - Pharmacist's name and GPhC Registration number; for example, 'Joe Bloggs (GPHC1234567)';
 - Pharmacy shared inbox details, for example, Pharmacy name, town, contractor number;
- Prescribers should monitor their Outlook application to ensure that the email was sent appropriately, for example, email successfully sends, no bounce back emails or 'out of office' replies. It is the responsibility of the sender to ensure the email was received by the recipient, DO NOT assume it has been received;
- Requesting a read receipt or confirmation email by return may help ensure the Prescriber that the Pharmacy has received the email, particularly in emergency situations and in light of the above point;
- A pragmatic approach to emailing should always be taken.

The [NHS Wales Email Use Policy for Primary Care Service Providers](#) is supplementary to the All Wales Email Use Policy issued under the All Wales Information Governance Policy Framework, it sets out the responsibilities of all users when accessing the NHS Wales email service. The NHS Wales Email Use Policy for Primary Care Service Providers should be read in conjunction with relevant organisational procedures.

Safe-Haven Fax

The use of communicating information via fax is now being actively discouraged as a method of transferring confidential health related information due to the risks involved. However, where no alternative is available their use may be considered, providing the 'Safe Haven' rules are followed, see the [IG Guidance on Safe Haven Faxing](#) for further information on Safe Haven rules.

Frequently used Pharmacy fax numbers should be carefully programmed into the fax machine and tested to ensure they are correct; this will help reduce misdirection. Confirmation should also be sought on whether the fax machine is a Safe Haven Fax; securely located with restricted access.



A cover sheet should be used containing a confidentiality statement, with contact details of the sender and confirmation of the number of pages attached.

If the fax you are sending to is not a Safe Haven Fax, the sender must request that the recipient wait by the fax machine and confirm receipt. If there is any doubt do not send prescriptions by fax.

